



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department Of Agriculture Rural Development
Rm. 152 Federal Building 100 Centennial Mall North Lincoln, Neb. 68508
(402) 437-5551 (Phone) (402) 437-5093 (TDY) (402) 437-5408 (Fax)

Karissa Hagedorn (308) 237-3118

USDA Rural Development Provides Grants Promoting Energy Efficiency and Value-Added Endeavors

North Platte, Neb. December 13, 2005-USDA Rural Development's Scot Blehm, state director for Nebraska, presented three grant recipients with symbolic funding checks today. The checks, totaling nearly \$30,000, represent USDA's commitment to conserving energy and increasing economic opportunities through the development of new products and markets for agriculturally based products.

"USDA Rural Development energy and value-added grants help ensure the profitability and sustainability of rural producers and businesses," stated Blehm. "With the dollars saved on energy and the money being kept at home with the producers from value-added efforts, Nebraska's rural economy will gain strength, making it possible for more rural communities to thrive."

Check recipients include:

- RZ Management of Ogallala received a \$16,000 planning grant to determine the feasibility of starting a vegetable and herb dehydration facility. If project proves feasible, a business and marketing plan will be developed.
- Seifer Farms, LLC of Sutherland will use a \$10,000 planning grant to conduct a feasibility study and to develop business and marketing plans for the production and marketing of all natural, pasture raised chickens.
- Diamond Pines, LLC of Gothenburg received \$3,690 to replace 80 light fixtures in the Gothenburg Professional Building, increase the tonnage of the facility's cooling system, and to switch to an air-to-air heat pump. Energy costs will be reduced by 62 percent for a savings of \$2,470 annually.

Statewide, \$418,348 in energy grants were awarded in Fiscal Year 2005 assisting in 36 energy efficiency improvements projects and 1 renewable energy. Value-added grants totaling \$1,113,540 assisted 16 producers in value-added ventures. The 2002 Farm Bill made available monies for both energy and value-added projects through the USDA Rural Development Energy Efficiency Improvements and Renewable Energy Systems and Value-Added Producer Grant programs. Since the beginning of these programs, Nebraska has received nearly \$778,000 for 57 energy projects and over \$7.7 million assisting in 54 value-added ventures.

-more



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department Of Agriculture Rural Development
Rm. 152 Federal Building 100 Centennial Mall North Lincoln, Neb. 68508
(402) 437-5551 (Phone) (402) 437-5093 (TDY) (402) 437-5408 (Fax)

Energy grants are awarded to farmers, ranchers, and for-profit small rural businesses for renewable energy systems such as wind, solar, biomass, biogas, or geothermal sources or hydrogen derived from biomass or water using wind, solar, or geothermal energy sources; and for energy efficiency improvement projects such as improvements to HVAC systems, insulation, refrigeration, lighting, pumping systems, air systems, motor systems, irrigation systems, etc.

Value-added grants help producers to expand the customer base for their commodities through a value-added activity that allows producers to retain a greater profit in the marketplace.

For additional information contact Karissa Hagedorn, 4009 North 6th Avenue, Suite 1, Kearney, Neb. 68845, karissa.hagedorn@ne.usda.gov, (308) 237-3118; (402) 437-5093 (TDY). Visit <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ne/>.

#

“USDA Rural Development is an Equal Opportunity provider, employer and lender.” To file a complaint of discrimination write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington D.C. 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice), or (202) 720-6382 (TDD).